

**THE BIG IDEA: God gives signs to the world through the church.**The Take-Off

Back when I was a teen and attending church but not really living for Jesus, I used to do something that won't make sense to you unless you grew up in church.

I used to come home from dates and peek in my younger sister's room to make sure that she was in her bed.

I didn't do this because I necessarily cared about her that much, but because I feared being left behind in the rapture.

Since my sister was just a child, I was convinced that she'd be taken in the rapture, and since the things that happened on most of my dates didn't give me a lot of confidence that I would be, I would listen for her breathing so that I could go to sleep without breaking out in a cold-seated panic.

Of course, I never actually considered how panicked I would have been if she hadn't been there! All I knew was that I needed some kind of sign about where I stood with God.

For me, my sister was that sign.

Now we can debate all day long the wisdom of not living a life that glorifies God and still hoping you don't miss the rapture, but the bigger point here is that there are times when all of us need assurance about our faith.

Now, I want to submit that we don't have to live like that, and that there are better ways to know that we're following Jesus than hoping we don't miss the rapture.

During my devotions recently, I read a verse that prompted this entire series, and it's found in **1 John 3:14**.

Notice a few things:

1. The Greek word for "know" is about facts, the force of something with definite meaning.
2. The phrase "passed from death to life" is talking about salvation.
3. This means that it IS possible to know we're saved.
4. Because introduces the way we can know, and John was clear: because we love brothers and sisters.

In the NLT, that verse read: "If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life."

As I studied, I saw that this verse is only talking about one of many proofs - or signs - of life.

Now, before we take a closer look at this first sign, we really need to take a closer look at signs in general.

**1. What do we mean by signs?**

- a. First, we don't mean "checklist of things to do in order to be a Christian"
- b. We don't have to DO anything to BE a believer. As followers of Jesus, we put ALL of our trust in ALL that Jesus has ALREADY done.
- c. Signs of life are simply evidences - proof - that we are alive.
- d. Think about this: you don't have to remind yourself to breathe when you get up each day. You just ... breathe. Why? BECAUSE you're alive, and living people breathe.
- e. This series is so much more about living a life that is "naturally supernatural" than it is about following the "7 rules to prove to the world that you're the best Christian ever!"
- f. This is so critical, because it's way too easy to slip back to a legalistic mindset, and the signs that we'll be talking about throughout this summer series do not make up a rule book.

**2. Why do we need signs?**

- a. For instruction, directions, inspiration, assurance. The list might be endless, but let's just boil it down to one simple reason: we need signs because we doubt.
- b. Doubt isn't a sign of unbelief as much as it is a sign that we need Someone greater than us to believe in.
- c. Thomas doubted until he saw the proof - the signs of life - and then he believed - fiercely!
- d. Jesus didn't throw Thomas under the bus; he showed Thomas the proof he needed
- e. God understands our doubts, and meets us IN them in order to show us that He is greater THAN them
- f. Ultimately, God gives us signs so we can follow Him - and that's exactly what happened in **1 Kings 18**
  - **v. 24** / This was a showdown to see which God would give a sign
  - **vv. 26-29** / Dead gods can't give signs of life
  - **vv. 38-39** / But a living God can, and did, and the people recognized His as THE ONE TRUE GOD; the ONLY GOD able to answer with signs of life

- g. Before we talk through the first sign of life, let me answer one more foundational question: can we ask God for a sign?
- h. Jesus said in **Matthew 16:1-4** that a wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign
  - “Adulterous” implies non-committal
  - If I need signs beyond the death and resurrection to convince me that Jesus is the Messiah, I’m not in the believing generation
  - God is ok giving signs to unbelievers, but He gives them THROUGH BELIEVERS
  - **God gives signs TO the world THROUGH the church**

### 3. What’s the first sign?

- a. What’s the first sign that God shows the world through the church? “Agape” love - God’s kind of love
- b. **1 John 3:1** / it is a love that we are given by God
- c. **John 17:26** / Jesus prayed for agape love to be in us
- d. **1 Thessalonians 4:9** / we can’t be taught about agape love by anyone other than God
- e. **Galatians 5:14** / agape love is powerful enough to fulfill the ENTIRE law (5 books worth of commands!)
- f. **Ephesians 5:2** / agape love is able to guide us
- g. **John 13:35** / agape is a sign of life to the world, because...
- h. **1 John 4:7, 11-12, 19** / we can’t agape without receiving agape from God first!
- i. Get this: the greatest sign of new life in Christ is the agape love of Christ!
- j. Why? Because we literally do not have that kind of love in us without God putting it there first, so when we love like the Father, we are the sign of life that the world is looking for.
- k. And His love in us and through us becomes a sign of life to us, as well.

#### The Landing

So, love like your Father, and let that love be a sign that points others to life in Christ.  
You and I can love differently because the Father’s love - the agape love - has made us different.  
Let’s pray.